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UNCLAS VATICAN 005640

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EUR/WE (MENNUTI); NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL QA VT

SUBJECT: VATICAN AND QATAR ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

¶1. THE HOLY SEE ANNOUNCED NOVEMBER 18 THAT IT HAS ESTABLISHED FORMAL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH QATAR. THE HOLY SEE WILL BE REPRESENTED AT THE LEVEL OF NUNCIO AND QATAR BY AN AMBASSADOR. THE HOLY SEE HAS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH MOST MOSLEM STATES WITH THE GLARING EXCEPTION OF SAUDI ARABIA, OMAN, AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES. IT ALSO HAS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB LEAGUE AND THE PALESTINIAN LIBERATION ORGANIZATION.

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¶2. QATAR'S CATHOLIC POPULATION NUMBERS AROUND 45,000 - MOSTLY MIGRANT WORKERS FROM THE PHILIPPINES - SUPPORTED BY 8 PRIESTS WHO ALSO WORK IN YEMEN, SAUDI ARABIA, BAHRAIN, THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, AND OMAN.

¶3. COMMENT: THE HOLY SEE CONTINUES TO SEEK TO INTENSIFY ITS DIALOGUE WITH ISLAMIC STATES, PRIMARILY TO ENSURE ADEQUATE PASTORAL CARE FOR RESIDENT CATHOLICS. IN THE WAKE OF 9/11, HOWEVER, THE DIALOGUE HAS TAKEN ON GREATER URGENCY AS THE POPE AND HIS COLLABORATORS WORK TO AVOID A "CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS" BETWEEN ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY, AND BETWEEN THE ARAB WORLD AND THE WEST. END COMMENT.

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